

Ravens

Mount Erie

In October 2015, I was out in the yard
I'd just finished splitting up the scrap two-by-fours into kindling
I glanced up at the half-moon, pink, chill refinery cloud light
Two big black birds flew over, their wings whooshing and low
Two ravens, but only two
Their black feathers tinted in the sunset

I knew these birds were omens but of what I wasn't sure
They were flying out toward the island where we hoped to move
You were probably inside, you were probably aching, wanting not to die
Your body transformed
I couldn't bear to look so I turned my head west, like an early death
Now I can only see you on the fridge in lifeless pictures

And in every dream I have at night, and in every room I walk into
Like here, where I sit the next October, still seeing your eyes
Pleading and afraid, full of love
Calling out from another place, because you're not here
I watched you die in this room, then I gave your clothes away
I'm sorry, I had to, and now I'll move

I will move with our daughter
We will ride over water
With your ghost underneath the boat
What was you is now burnt bones
And I cannot be at home
I'm running, grief flailing

The second time I went to Haida Gwaii was just me and our daughter
Only one month after you died, my face was still contorted
Driving up and down, boots wet inside, aimless and weeping
I needed to return to the place where we discovered that childless, we could
blanket ourselves in the moss there for our long lives

But when we came home, you were pregnant
And then our life together was not long;
You had cancer and you were killed and I'm left living like this
Crying on the logging roads with your ashes in a jar
Thinking about the things I'll tell you
When you get back from wherever it is that you've gone
But then I remember death is real

And I'm still here in Masset, it's August 12th, 2016
You've been dead for one month and three days, and we are sleeping in the forest
There is sand still in the blankets from the beach
Where we released you from the jar
When we wake up, all the clothes that we left out are cold and damp just from the air permeating, the ground opens up

Surrounded by growth; nurse logs with layers of moss and life
Young cedars, the sound of water, thick salal, and God-like huckleberries
The ground absorbs and remakes whatever falls, nothing dies here
But here is where I came to grieve, to dive into it with you, with your absence, but I keep picking you berries